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(54) **SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR ACCESSING
AN INTERVERTEBRAL DISC SPACE IN A
BODY OF A PATIENT**

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See application file for complete search history.

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**

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(57)

ABSTRACT

A method for accessing an intervertebral disc space in a
patient's body involves making an incision in a region of the
patient's body that permits access to the psoas muscle, direct-
ing a blade of a first dissecting retractor through the incision
and such that a distal end of the first dissecting retractor blade
is positioned proximate the intervertebral disc space, and
directing, independently of the first dissecting retractor blade,
a blade of a second dissecting retractor through the incision
and such that a distal end of the second dissecting retractor
blade is positioned proximate the intervertebral disc space.
During their placement within the patient's body, the first and
second dissecting retractor blades are employed in a tissue
dissection process. Following the positioning of the distal
ends of the first and second dissecting retractor blades proximate
the intervertebral disc space, the first and second dis-
secting retractors are coupled to one another.

22 Claims, 28 Drawing Sheets

